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## 6.0 COMMENTS AND COORDINATION

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) are serving as lead agencies to prepare this combined Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report (EIS/EIR). This document is being prepared in cooperation with the County of Imperial and the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG).

This environmental document was prepared following consultation and coordination with various federal, state and local agencies, organizations and individuals from the project area in the Imperial Valley. Agency consultation and public participation have been accomplished through a variety of formal and informal methods including scoping meetings, a series of Imperial County Transportation Plan meetings and public agency meetings. A public hearing will be conducted following circulation of this document.

The Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the proposed project was mailed November 5, 1996 to federal, state and local agencies. The Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement was published in the Federal Register on November 1, 1996.

The proposed SR 78/111 project was introduced at Public Information Forums held to inform residents and gather public comments on the Imperial County Transportation Plan during September 1996. The forums were held in the Cities of Brawley and El Centro on September 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> of 1996. The Imperial Valley Association of Governments (IVAG), the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), and Caltrans sponsored the meetings. Key agency and public comments received concerned home and farmland loss, safety issues when farm equipment crosses the four-lane expressway, access, noise, division of farm parcels, and preferences for one alternative over another.

The Initial Public Scoping Meeting for the project was held on October 28, 1996. Comments submitted at or following the meeting are discussed below.

Caltrans has coordinated the Route 78/111 Brawley Bypass project with the appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies, as well as interested citizens. This early coordination effort is described below.

### 6.1 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAM

A Project Development Team (PDT) was assembled by Caltrans to serve as the technical advisory committee and decision making body for the study. The Project Development Team consists of staff representatives from Caltrans program management and technical divisions (such as environmental planning, traffic, geometric design, and right-of-way). The PDT meets at key times during the course of project development as issues arise requiring technical direction or resolution.

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## 6.2 AGENCIES CONTACTED

Considerable coordination has occurred with the resource and regulatory agencies throughout the environmental study process. Caltrans has worked closely with representatives of these agencies. Dated correspondence indicates written responses received from agencies:

- October 26, 1996, Imperial County Planning Department
- October 28, 1996, City of Brawley Planning Department
- October 30, 1996, City of Brawley
- November 15, 1996, California Department of Conservation
- November 21, 1996, California Department of Fish and Game
- November 22, 1996, US Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
- November 25, 1996, United States Environmental Protection Agency
- November 25, 1996, Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG)
- December 11, 1996, Imperial Irrigation District
- January 15, 1997, United States Environmental Protection Agency
- January 17, 1997, US Department of Interior - Fish and Wildlife Service
- January 15, 1999, Imperial County Public Works
- April 16, 1999, Office of Historic Preservation Department of Parks and Recreation
- July 30, 1999, US Army Corps of Engineer

## 6.3 CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Since 1996 on-going meetings have taken place with community groups such as the Brawley Chamber of Commerce, with individual businesses such as Imperial Grain Growers and the general public. The City of Brawley, Imperial County Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission have been involved in project update meetings.

### Meetings

In addition to the initial Public Scoping Meetings, a series of public information forums were at the Cities of Brawley and El Centro on September 24 and 25, 1996. The three forums enabled residents to express concerns and issues pertaining to the study area, and help set the scope of the environmental studies. Written comments from the attendees supported the project. Members of the California Transportation Commission (CTC) have been involved in supporting the proposed project.

### Public Agency Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted between September 1996 and March 2000 with agency staff to learn about project study issues and community interests that should be addressed in the study process. Agencies interviewed include: City of Brawley, Imperial County Board of Supervisors, Imperial Irrigation District, and the Imperial County Agriculture Commission.

## 6.4 MAJOR INVESTMENT STUDY (MIS) COORDINATION WITH AGENCIES

The MIS process included coordination with various agencies including the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the County of Imperial/ Imperial Valley Association of Governments (IVAG). A presentation was made to the SCAG MIS Peer Review Group on December 17, 1998 to inform the committee of studies being conducted and the approach the MIS would take to satisfy review agency requirements. The Group concurred that all of the MIS requirements set forth in the Metropolitan Planning Rules have been met as evidenced in the Letter of Completion reproduced at Figure 6-1.

Public information meetings were held on September 24, 25, and October 28, 1996; March 16; 1999, May 19, 1999; and August 26, to give the community an opportunity to review and comment about the proposed project. There is some opposition to various alternatives, but not to the project overall. Some landowners along the proposed alignment have voiced concerns about potential adverse economic impacts to their properties. Generally, there is support for the project from citizens, agencies and organizations.

## 6.5 CHRONOLOGY OF CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

The following is a chronology of key consultation and coordination events leading to this document:

- September 24, 1996, Public Information Forum on the Imperial County Long-Range Transportation Plan, at the Brawley Senior Center, City of Brawley. Staff from Caltrans, Imperial Valley Association of Governments, and Southern California Association of Governments shared maps and proposed improvements; interested residents were invited to express their opinions, ideas, and concerns on the county's highway and public transportation needs.
- September 25, 1996, Public Information Forum on the Imperial County Long-Range Transportation Plan, at the Board of Supervisors Chambers, City of El Centro.
- September 26, 1996, Public Information Forum on the Imperial County Long-Range Transportation Plan, the City of Calexico Community Center.
- October 16, 1996, Army Corps of Engineers Pre-Application Meeting.
- October 28, 1996, Public Scoping Meeting held at the Brawley Senior Center in City of Brawley to explain the project's purpose and need and preliminary alternatives, and receive residents' ideas and concerns regarding the alternatives being considered.
- A Notice of Intent (NOI) was submitted to FHWA for transmittal to EPA and publication in the Federal Register on Friday November 1, 1996 (Figure 6-2).
- On November 5, 1996, letters were sent to four agencies-United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), US Natural Resource Conservation Service (US NRCS)-requesting that each act as a "Cooperating Agency". The USFWS, ACOE, and the USNRCS agreed to be cooperating agencies (see Figure 6-3A, Figure 6-3B, and Figure 6-3C).
- May 15, 1998, Caltrans sent a letter to the USFWS requesting a formal list of rare or endangered species in the project area.
- April 3, 1997, Brawley Bypass PDT/ Kickoff Meeting.

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- August 26, 1997, Imperial Grain Growers (IGG) Meeting, held at their office in the City of Brawley.
  - January 14, 1998, SCAG (MIS) meeting.
  - January 21, 1998, Brawley Bypass Specialist Meeting.
  - January 26, 1999, Imperial County Board of Supervisors meetings.
  - February 24, 1999, Imperial County Planning Commission meetings.
  - March 16, 1999, Imperial County Board of Supervisors meetings.
  - March 22, 1999, Discussion of Alternatives, Brawley Chamber of Commerce.
  - March 22, 1999, Discussion of Schedule, Alternatives, and Project Cost, Brawley City Staff.
  - March 22, 1999, Public Review, Brawley City Council.
  - April 15, 1999, US Army Corps Field Review
  - May 4, 1999, Luckey Ranch meeting or letter.
  - May 17, 1999, Public Information Meetings.
  - May 19, 1999, Brawley Bypass Public Information Meeting, Brawley Union High School Auditorium.
  - June 15, 1999, Lesika Construction, ETX, IGG meeting.
  - August 17, 1999, letter sent to agencies participating under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding the NEPA Clean Water Act Section 404 Permit Concurrent process, seeking early agreement with the project purpose and need and alternatives being studied. Responses were received from the US EPA on October 28, 1998, from the USFWS on May 19, 1998, and from the ACOE on July 29, 1999.
  - September 14, 1999, US Fish and Wildlife Review of the mountain plover, burrowing owl and other sensitive species have been on going
  - October 20, 1999, US Fish and Wildlife Review of the mountain plover, burrowing owl and other sensitive species have been on going
  - December 9, 1999 US Fish and Wildlife Review of the mountain plover, burrowing owl and other sensitive species have been on going
  - January 12, 2000, Discussion of Alternatives, Brawley Chamber of Commerce.
  - January 25, 2000, Imperial County Board of Supervisors.
  - February 11, 2000, Discussion of Schedule, Alternatives, and Project Cost, Brawley City Staff.
  - March 6, 2000, J. Hull meeting at the City of Brawley.
  - March 16, 2000 Meeting with Luckey Ranch.
  - April 13, 2000, Meeting with Imperial Grain Growers.
  - April 18, 2000, Meeting with business owners and residents.
  - April 18, 2000, Meeting with Brawley Economic Development Commission.
  - April 27, 2000, Meeting with Brawley Staff.
  - USFWS regarding the mountain plover, burrowing owl and other sensitive species have been on going (9/14/99; 10/20/99; field review 12/09/99)

## 6.6 NEPA – SECTION 404 CONCURRENT PROCESS

The project has followed the guidance established in the NEPA – Section 404 Memorandum of Understanding between Caltrans, FHWA and the federal resource and regulatory agencies. Three resource agencies have participated as NEPA – 404 agreement agencies during development of the Route 78/111 Brawley Bypass project:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE)  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

On November 5, 1996 Caltrans formally requested the agencies' concurrence on four principal issues:

- NEPA purpose and need – the need for the project, and basic project purpose;
- Criteria for alternative selection;
- Project alternatives to be evaluated in the Draft EIS; and
- Participation of each agency, as a Cooperating Agency.

Each of the agencies was provided with information that would help them understand the purpose and need for the project, the criteria that were proposed for evaluating alternatives, and the alternatives that were proposed for consideration in the Draft EIS. By receiving comments and concurrence from these agencies on these issues early in the planning process, selection of a preferred alternative may proceed with less disagreement on basic issues later in the planning process.

Responses from each agency are reproduced in the following pages as Figure 6-4, Figure 6-5, and Figure 6-6. All agencies responded that they concur with the first three issues above. There was no formal acceptance by the EPA to participate as a Cooperating Agency.

Subsequent studies have indicated that an individual Section 404 permit will not be needed and the project will proceed with a Nationwide permit.

## 6.7 PERMITS AND APPROVALS

The following permits and / or approvals may be required from the respective responsible agencies:

- Section 7 consultation for threatened and endangered species (USFWS).
- A streambed alteration agreement (Section 1601) will be needed from the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG), prior to construction.
- Section 2080.1 certification for threatened and endangered species from DFG.
- A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Individual Permit for the Frederick 1 and 2 alternatives and a Nationwide permit 14, *Linear Road Crossings* for the Del Rio and Del Rio North Alternative will be needed prior to any construction activity.

- A Section 401 certification (or waiver thereof) will be required from the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB); water quality issues are addressed prior to issuance of the Section 404 Permit.
- To satisfy Section 402 of the Clean Water Act, a Notice of New Construction (Form) will be provided to the RWQCB prior to the beginning of actual construction, per the Waste Discharge Requirements and NPDES Permit No. CAS029998 for the California Department of Transportation permit requirements adopted on March 12, 1997.
- The California Transportation Commission Route Adoption.
- Controlled Access Highway Agreements (City of Brawley, County of Imperial).
- Imperial Irrigation District – Approval to Construct
- Union Pacific Railroad Company – (Railroad Agreement)

[Notice of Intent \(NOI\)](#)  
[Notice of Preparation \(NOP\)](#)

#### LETTERS AND COMMENTS RECEIVED IN RESPONSE TO THE NOI AND NOP

[Imperial Irrigation District](#)  
[Southern California Association of Governments \(SCAG\)](#)  
[California Department of Fish & Game](#)  
[California Department of Conservation](#)  
[City of Brawley](#)  
[Imperial County Planning Department](#)  
[U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#)  
[MIS Completion Letter from Southern California Association of Governments \(SCAG\)](#)

#### COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING, OCTOBER 28, 1996

[RNM Architects Planners](#)  
[The Le Plastrier Companies](#)  
[Comments Submitted at Public Hearing or by Comment Cards](#)

